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ABSTRACT

This document, based on input from faculty and students, presents a rationale, definition, and goal specification for general education at Miami-Dade Community College. Responsiveness to community education needs and "open admissions" are posited to be two important aspects of the mission of the community college. To integrate these mission concepts with a rationale for general education, five values of general education are put forth: (1) it enables individuals to integrate their knowledge; (2) it offers opportunity for commitment to lifelong learning; (3) it enables students to intensify the self-actualization process; (4) it enables students to find meaning and value in their life experiences; and (5) it enables students to better understand their places in the world and to more fully realize their potential. General education is defined as that which has as its fundamental nature and purpose the integration of every student's knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experiences. The goals of general education, expressed in terms of competencies, are listed as are principles for curriculum development. Student demographic data, the "basic skills problem", the "survival/enrichment" issue, the "career" issue, and the "quality" issue are discussed as factors germane to development of a general education program. (JDS)

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GENERAL EDUCATION

AT

MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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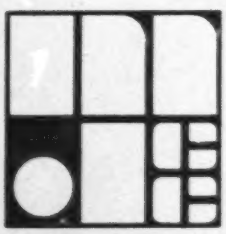

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Prepared By GENERAL EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE

D R A F T D O C U M E N T

GENERAL EDUCATION

at

MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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May 1, 1976

D R A F T D O C U M E N T

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INTRODUCTION

The General Education Study Committee was formed in March, 1975, under the auspices of the College Committee on Academic Affairs. The committee is composed of representatives from each campus, as well as from every major academic division, student services, and the faculty senates. The purpose of the study is to review the college's general education program and to make recommendations for improvement. In the past several years a number of faculty have expressed interest in reviewing the general education program, and in some cases innovative programs have been developed. The Institutional Self Study, 1974 (Vol. 1, p. 59) contained the following recommendations relative to general education:

1. The college as well as each campus should set up a comprehensive evaluation of the outcomes of instruction in general education, and should establish a comprehensive, in-depth follow-up of the progress, responses, and suggestions of the graduates of the college.

2. Some formal method of remedial assistance should be established for each general education course.

3. The goals, objectives, and content of each general education course together with the reactions of students to the courses, should be thoroughly evaluated by the administrators responsible with a view to restructuring content and presentation where the evaluations deem it necessary.

4. Every effort should be made to make the rationale for general education courses clear and meaningful to faculty and students alike.

The General Education Study Committee has attempted to implement these recommendations. The Committee has met approximately every two weeks to discuss the nature of general education and to clarify issues that have arisen. It has met with faculty on each campus in "town meetings" and individually to get faculty input about the direction general

education should take at Miami-Dade. The purpose of the study was explained to the campus student governments. Speakers were invited to speak to faculty and to share their views about general education with the committee.

On the basis of this input, the committee has prepared this draft document. The document presents a rationale for general education, defines general education, and specifies goals of general education for Miami-Dade. It also includes position statements on issues that have arisen in discussions. The committee is very concerned that it get the reactions and ideas of all faculty, since any recommendations for change are likely to affect the majority of faculty. It will be particularly helpful if the faculty members provide a brief rationale for any position statements or arguments they care to make. A check sheet will be provided so that faculty may indicate their reactions to each section of this draft document. After faculty have had an opportunity to read and react to this document, committee members will meet with departments to discuss major issues of interest and to answer any questions about statements in the document. Then, a revised document will be prepared and distributed again to all faculty.

During the 1976-77 year, campus subcommittees will examine the campus general education programs in view of the general education goals. The subcommittees will make recommendations concerning specific general education requirements, the organization of general education programs, and general education areas which are in need of curriculum development. This process will also require the ideas and assistance of many faculty. The General Education Study Committee appreciates the ideas and suggestions it has already received from many faculty, and urges all faculty to continue to contribute to this very important general education study.

THE MISSION OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Although the roots and first growth of the community college can be traced back in the history of American education, its substantial growth and maturing occurred after World War II. Because its growth is more recent than that of both public and private university education, community college education often appears to be more vigorous and more adaptable to the environmental conditions it encounters. It adapts rather readily to new situations and it produces new growth, even in unexpected directions. It is very sensitive to the changes in values and attitudes of the public, and often reacts quickly and dramatically. But like all growing organisms, its final mature state is not certain. Although it is possible to predict certain primary characteristics of future community college education based on its past development, there probably will be other changes that are not apparent from the present perspective.

Thus, it is easily understandable and should not cause alarm that the mission of the community college, and thereby its goals and objectives, is continually evolving. A number of educators have expressed the need to determine the mission of the community college more clearly in order to provide programs that will enable the community college to fulfill its purpose. This is a reasonable objective, but it would be a mistake to attempt to develop a very specific statement of the mission of the community college that did not allow for this evolution and growth. Even in maturity, an individual or an institution can rethink its purpose and its destiny and make changes accordingly. Certainly, the public schools and universities

have undergone substantial changes and redefinitions in the course of their histories. On the other hand, their primary missions have now become rather firmly established, and changes in their missions would likely be more difficult and traumatic.

In Miami-Dade Community College's attempt to provide a general education program that is responsive to the basic goals of the community college, it is important to identify the elements of the college's present mission, even though these may well be debated, and to recognize trends and reactions that may influence the nature of this mission in the future. It should also be noted that a mission is understandable only in specific terms and, consequently, in reference only to a specific institution. The mission of Miami-Dade Community College must be specified in its institutional goals. Nevertheless, there are characteristics which are most likely common to the majority of community colleges.

The most obvious and perhaps most important aspect of the mission of the community college is <u>its responsiveness to the educational needs of the community</u>. Unlike many four-year colleges and universities, the community college is not set apart from the community to serve those students, from both within and outside the community, who choose to come to it. The concept of the educational institution being a haven from the daily worldly pursuits wherein the search for knowledge can take place unimpeded is not a strong part of the community college tradition. Rather, in the view of some, the community college should assume a leadership role and be actively involved in educating the community so as to make it a better environment in which individuals can live and grow. Even though many community colleges have campuses which are self-contained and which resemble the university campuses, these community colleges have often found the campus boundaries restrictive to this mission of serving the total community. In some cases, including

that of Miami-Dade, multi-campus institutions have developed. In others, extensions have been established in store-fronts, churches, and other school buildings. Miami-Dade has instructional programs in more than three hundred sites throughout Dade County. Furthermore, on the campuses and at the various outreach centers, a wide range of programs and courses are offered. Courses, offered both for credit and non-credit, include college transfer, technical and vocational, special interest, and personal growth and development. This is indicative that the community college is responsive to the community's needs, by providing both locations which are accessible and curricula which meet student needs and interests.

A second, most important aspect of the community college's mission, that of providing for the greatest possible number of citizens, is found in its "open admissions" policy. Inherent in this policy is a commitment to provide a wide range of courses, low tuition, and financial aid. One goal of this policy is to insure the democratization of the community by providing all its citizens with access to higher education. It is also a response to a broad educational goal, the development of the potential of every citizen. But, it is important that this openness to all students, regardless of their ability, prior preparation, or achievement, is not abused. The mission of the community college is to provide for successful learning by the community members, and not simply to guarantee access to the college. The community college should avoid another related misunderstanding of its role. While the certification of the learner's achievement by awarding a degree or certificate is part of the educational institution's responsibility, the certificate is not the primary goal. Rather, the college has committed itself to provide the setting and assistance necessary for students to achieve their educational goals and to learn what is necessary for them to function successfully during their lives. The measure of the

college's success can be found in the lives of its students, as well as in the degrees and certificates awarded.

A RATIONALE FOR GENERAL EDUCATION

A rationale for general education should answer the basic question, "Why have it?" In an age when the expansion of knowledge increasingly demands specialization and the complexity of local and international economies increases the difficulty of finding satisfactory employment, there is an understandable pressure to deemphasize or to eliminate the traditional, broad general education.

To the question, "Why have it?", there often have been typically uncritical generalizations as responses. Supporters of general education have often argued from untested assumptions. Some state simply that students need a "broad" education. They need to be exposed to different areas of learning. An educated person is a "well-rounded" person. Students need to be grounded in the basic knowledge of the disciplines in order to progress to more specialized areas. All of these responses lack a specific statement of the values to be derived from a general education program.

Critics of general education have argued from equally unsupported assumptions. This is especially true of those who view education in terms of immediate economic factors and of those who reduce post-secondary education to career preparation. They respond that the purpose of education is not to deal with the "personal" lives of students, but to provide them with the knowledge necessary to succeed in career choices. For them, a broad general education is unnecessary, as students need to concentrate their energies in their major fields. Others maintain that the aim

of education is for every graduate to have a marketable skill. Students come to college to be able to get a good job; consequently, any courses of interest to the students outside their major program areas should be elective or diminished.

An analysis of these responses, both those supporting and those opposing general education, reveals that they are superficial, lacking specific values that can be derived from each approach. At most, these responses merely imply positions in support of certain values. A rationale for general education at Miami-Dade Community College should be based on the mission and goals of the College, the nature and needs of the community, the needs of its students, and the significant changes likely to take place in society in the near future. Fundamental to this rationale are value statements. It is important that these values be acknowledged as clearly as possible in order that educational priorities be preserved. Thus, the question, "Why have it?", is directly related to another question, "What is its worth?"

A primary value of general education is that it enables individuals to integrate their knowledge so that they may draw upon the many sources of learning in making decisions and taking action in daily practical situations. Although knowledge for its own sake might be defended in view of the overall advance of mankind, it seems evident that every individual has a basic need to integrate cognitive knowledge, affective attitudes, and psychomotor skills, both to cope with the complexities found in modern society and to enhance the quality of one's life. An integrated general education program can enable the student not only to understand the function and basic procedures of individual disciplines but also the relationships among disciplines and their interaction in the solution of social and environmental problems. In a society structured on the democratic process,

one of the prime effects of this integrated knowledge should be that individuals become more intelligent and effective voters. They should be able to understand democratic principles and to appreciate democratic values, and thereby confidently cope with political and social issues.

A second fundamental value of general education is that it offers a beginning or a further commitment to a lifetime of learning. General education should not be conceived as a contained or terminal program. A general education program should initiate or intensify a lifelong process of mature inquiry and discourse, so that learning becomes an integral part of the individual's personal growth throughout life. This lifelong learning is necessitated by several characteristics of modern society: the great increase in the quantity of knowledge and the increased sophistication in the storage and retrieval of information; the escalation of change in society, especially in the areas of personal lifestyles, social institutions and structures, and economic development; and the uncertainty of the future as related to career opportunities and the preparatory learning required. General education can stimulate students to develop a positive attitude toward further learning to meet their personal and career needs throughout life.

A third value of general education is that it enables students to intensify the process of self-actualization. General education provides an opportunity for students to realize the importance of directing their own lives and to understand the choices in their relationships with other individuals, man-made systems, and the various environments in which they live. In the stress and complexity of life in modern society, students must develop a positive approach to life with the understanding that they can and should take charge of their lives. The growing population in urban areas and the increasing complexity of urban society are particularly

significant because of the stress introduced into the existence of all urbanites. This stress has increased the need for various social services, the concerns for mental and physical health, the deterioration in overall job performance, and the widespread dissatisfaction with life in general. Students should understand the sources of this stress and learn how to find personal fulfillment in a way that is congruent with the forces that will always be present to some extent in their environments. Individuals can make a difference in altering the quality of their own lives and the lives of those in the community. If more individuals would understand and influence the environments in which they function, a long range effect could be an economically advantageous reduction in the need for care for individuals suffering from stress-related illnesses and an increase in an individual's personal and job productivity.

A fourth value of general education is that it can enable students to find value in the activities and experiences of their lives, both those engaged in because of obligations or commitments and those which are discretionary in nature. For most individuals those activities which are entered into because of obligations are found in the family and at work. There is abundant evidence that family life has become less permanent and unsatisfying for many, as families engage in fewer common activities and family break-ups proliferate. Both married and unmarried, young and old students need to find value in family life and to enjoy those experiences which make it meaningful. Likewise, research shows that there is increasing job dissatisfaction, especially among the "underemployed," among those employed in repetitive and uninteresting work, as well as among those in the "highest" work levels. In this area, general education must be concerned not only with the ability of the student to understand and accept a work role,

but also to take steps to gain satisfaction on the job. The quality of many jobs will improve only when both employers and employees recognize the need to make jobs as personally satisfying as possible.

Equally as important as the family and work experiences are those experiences which fill an individual's discretionary times, times when choices can be made concerning those activities in which to engage. Some futurists forecast that the amount of discretionary time available to individuals will increase significantly by the end of the century. As natural resources are steadily depleted and their availability becomes limited, there will almost certainly be a reduction in per capita consumption in the United States. The technological development in this country, the impact that a single worker can have, combined with the forecast reduction in consumption, will predictably result in the need for fewer lifetime hours of work for the average employee. This could be a boon. For centuries philosophers have speculated concerning a society in which there was less work needed for survival and where individuals would have more time to pursue creative activities, to strive for advanced knowledge, and to participate in aesthetic experiences. It is fair to predict that future Americans will have the time; the question will be whether or not they will be prepared to use this time in a way that will bring satisfaction. There are many signs, however, that the typical American is not prepared to use his/her discretionary time in a satisfying way. For many elderly the experience of retirement is traumatic. First, a job has controlled their lives by introducing structure and scheduling that allowed limited time for other activities. Secondly, many feel that an individual who isn't working is of no value; work is the only worthy activity. General education can provide a basis for individuals to appreciate and to

find satisfying and valuable uses of their discretionary time.

Specific areas for which discretionary time can be used with great profit to the individual are creative activities and aesthetic experiences. Although humans, like all creatures, require certain skills and competencies for survival, they are unique in their ability to reason and to deal with abstract ideas. In many places in the world today, survival needs are still food, clothing, and shelter. Most Americans, however, are not primarily concerned with these basic conditions for survival, but rather seek to satisfy desires that are higher in the hierarchy of needs. And in an affluent society, many seek more from life than an accumulation of material luxuries. Individuals can reduce their dependence on material goods as they find greater meaning and personal satisfaction in their creative endeavors and from their aesthetic experiences. General education can provide the opportunity to engage in these activities and the guidance and assistance to derive greater satisfaction from them.

Finally, a fifth value of general education is that it can enable students to understand better their places in the world and to realize more fully their potential by increasing their familiarity with the breadth and depth of ideas, the growth of society and institutions, and the development and application of the scientific process in communities throughout the world. It has not been uncommon in recent years for educators to attack the role of the traditional disciplines in education, and especially in general education. Certainly, there seem to have been abuses where the educational process was dictated by the organization of the school and by learning by disciplines. Nevertheless, the scholastic disciplines, as well as the more recent discipline areas in technical and occupational fields, have played an invaluable part in the refinement and sophistication of modern man's

investigative and reasoning processes. The disciplines themselves should not be condemned, rather the manner in which they have often been used. Mankind has progressed by expanding ideas and individuals must be aware of this progress if they wish to realize their own intellectual potential. Likewise, students need a historical perspective to be able to evaluate the significance of events and to make judgments concerning current events as they develop. In an age which is so widely influenced by science and technology, an individual must also understand the scientific process if science is to remain a means for progress and not the master of one's life.

A specific area of the student's understanding is man's relation with the natural environment and natural resources. American citizens are fortunate in having more material goods than the citizens of any other previous or current society. But, over the years, with the growing material wealth of this country, the point has been reached where the inbalance between the country's development and that of other areas of the world has resulted in Americans undervaluing natural resources and becoming unacceptably high consumers of these resources. Furthermore, because the developments of the last twenty years in communications have been particularly swift and dramatic, more people throughout the world are aware of the differences between the lifestyles of Americans and their own. They are now reaching for their "fair share" of the finite resources of the world. At the same time, the world is experiencing a population explosion generated by mankind's increasing capacity to control the environment and various natural enemies. The economic difficulties being experienced in the United States and other industrial nations are to a great degree the result of the beginning of a correction in the value assigned to natural resources. General education can provide an understanding of the natural environment and its

resources and can motivate each individual to develop values that are in harmony with the supply and the equitable distribution of these resources.

GENERAL EDUCATION DEFINED

The term "general education" represents a broad educational concept that has undergone considerable evolution in American education. Because the term represents a broad concept, its specific meaning for an educational institution is to be found in the statement of the goals of general education and in the actual implementation of the general education program. Most definitions of general education have fallen into two categories: (1) those that include all education which is not directed towards the specialized skills, knowledge, and attitudes associated with vocational or career preparation; (2) those that specify a common content, curriculum, focus, set of skills, type of attitudes, or outcomes that are applicable to all students. Definitions in the former category are so unspecific that they do not give a sense of the direction the general education program should take, nor do they emphasize particular components or outcomes of the program. The definitions in the latter category can quite possibly omit important aspects of general education in their enumerations. Consequently, general education is here defined in terms of its basic nature and function. General education as a function is distinguished from the general education program which specifies the educational areas applicable to all the college's students.

General education, at Miami-Dade Community College, is that aspect of the college's instructional function which has as its fundamental nature and purpose the integration of every student's knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experiences as a part of a lifelong process of inquiry and decision

making. The general education program at Miami-Dade Community College is that collection of learning experiences designed to assist all students (1) to have a realistic, yet positive understanding of themselves, (2) to find meaning and fulfillment in their lives, (3) to acquire the skills necessary to function effectively, (4) to relate successfully with others, (5) to understand and appreciate world cultures and societies, and (6) to understand and function effectively in their social and natural environments.

The general education program is general in that its outcomes are applicable to every individual, regardless of the student's particular career and personal objectives. This does not imply that the curriculum and learning experiences should be identical for all. As individuals differ in social and educational backgrounds, previous experiences, and personal goals, general education will differ for individuals. The goals of the general education program, however, do specify fundamental commonalities. These goals should be understood in the context of desirable outcomes, and not in the context of specific courses or activities alone.

GOALS OF GENERAL EDUCATION

The goals of the general education program are extensions and further specifications of the institutional goals of Miami-Dade Community College. Furthermore, it is clear that these goals cannot be attained fully in the brief years of the students' college work, but that these goals represent the continuation and intensification of a lifelong process of learning. These general education goals are grouped according to the six areas of learning identified for the general education program in the section, "General Education Defined." The six areas are:

1. Having a realistic, yet positive understanding of self.
2. Finding meaning and fulfillment in life.
3. Acquiring the skills necessary to function effectively.
4. Relating successfully with others.
5. Understanding and appreciating world cultures and societies.
6. Understanding and functioning effectively in the social and natural environments.

The students' attainment of these goals can be measured by their completion of objectives developed for the specific competencies desired.

1. <u>Having a realistic, yet positive understanding of self:</u>

   A. The students will develop self-acceptance and self-sufficiency based on their knowledge of themselves.

   B. The students will increase their understanding of the biological and psychological natures of man.

   C. The students will develop and maintain their physical, mental and emotional health.

D. The students will understand better the impact of prejudices associated with age, sex, religion, and ethnic and national backgrounds on their attitudes and behavior.

E. The students will understand more clearly important aspects of the birth-life-death cycle.

2. Finding meaning and fulfillment in life:

A. The students will clarify their personal values in life and their life goals, and will integrate these with their decision-making.

B. The students will make career choices that are compatible with their abilities, interests, and opportunities.

C. The students will clarify their educational objectives in view of their career choices and non-career pursuits.

D. The students will make choices of educational programs and courses to support their next level of education, whether within an educational institution, on the job, or in another setting.

E. The students will develop an appreciation for aesthetic and creative activities and find value in participating in such activities.

F. The students will assume responsibility for their continued learning throughout life.

3. Acquiring the skills necessary to function effectively:

A. The students will be able to read, write, listen and speak in an organized and critical manner.

B. The students will be able to carry out computations basic to producers and consumers in their society.

C. The students will be able to establish effective communication with individuals in the various areas of their lives.

D. The students will develop intellectual and critical methods of thinking and making decisions.

E. The students will refine their abilities to identify and solve problems in an organized and logical manner.

F. The students will be able to interrelate knowledge from various disciplines in pursuing the goals of their daily lives.

4. Relating successfully with others:

   A. The students will understand better the characteristics of effective interpersonal relationships and will develop their interpersonal skills.

   B. The students will analyze how groups function effectively within and apart from organizational structures and will develop their own skills in working within and with groups.

   C. The students will develop more satisfying human relations.

   D. The students will develop greater appreciation of the cultures of other ethnic groups.

   E. The students will make greater efforts to maintain productive and satisfying family units.

5. Understanding and appreciating world cultures and societies:

   A. The students will increase their understanding and appreciation of the history and accomplishments of mankind.

   B. The students will have greater understanding of various philosophies and life styles which individuals have adopted throughout history.

   C. The students will better understand the ideas and events which have shaped the American society.

   D. The students will understand more fully and appreciate the essential characteristics of their national and world citizenship.

6. Understanding and functioning effectively in the social and natural environments:

   A. The students will better understand and appreciate the structure and components of their natural environment.

   B. The students will better understand and appreciate the structure and components of the man-made environment.

   C. The students will increase their commitment to maintain a high quality in the natural and man-made environments.

   D. The students will attain a greater understanding of the organization and functioning of the American society, especially its political and economic components.

E. The students will become more enlightened and effective voters.

F. The students will become more effective consumers of the products of their environments.

PRINCIPLES TO BE USED IN DEVELOPING THE GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS AND CURRICULA

1. General education is the beginning or continuation of what should be a lifelong process. The students' learning in the general education program should have an impact on the rest of their lives.

2. The general education curriculum should have as one of its principal goals the integration of the students' knowledge, skills, and learning experiences.

3. There are many processes for organizing learning programs. There are alternative ways of achieving the general education goals. No one way will be most effective for all students.

4. Individuals have unique, different learning styles. Instructors have different teaching styles. As far as possible, students should be able to make choices of instructional processes and learning experiences according to their learning styles.

5. General education, much more than specialized education, assumes that students have related prior learning and background experiences. The degree of this learning and the range of background experiences will vary greatly among students. Consequently, in the general education curriculum instruction should be individualized as far as possible to meet the students' individual needs.

6. General education involves not only the highest cognitive processes, but also is especially concerned with the affective development of students and with providing them with a wide range of experiential learning activities. It is concerned with the development of the total individual.

7. Within practical limitations, general education goals apply to all students and are not restricted to transfer program students. The goals are intended for students in both arts and sciences and occupational programs, for young adults and senior adults, and for full-time and part-time students.

8. The resources and learning opportunities suitable for meeting the general education goals are to be found not only within the college institution, but also in many areas of the community. It is appropriate to make as much use of these community resources as possible.

9. Adult students should make substantial educational decisions about their programs and courses. This is not to support the conclusion that they should make all educationally related decisions for themselves.

10. Adults who are returning to formal education after a period of employment should have the flexibility to make educational choices based on their work experiences and non-institutional learning.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The planning of general education programs to meet the needs of the majority of students should take into consideration general characteristics of the student population. By studying data from the past five years those who are planning programs may make some forecasts of future trends and anticipate needs of students in the next decades. It would be unsound, however, to make absolute predictions since the presence or absence of a single important factor can reverse a trend in a brief period of time. The annual growth rate of the student population, shown in Table 1, illustrates this reversal in the 1972-73 year. For planning campus programs it would also be important to examine the data for the particular campus, since there are likely to be significant differences among the campuses for some of the data.

TABLE 1

College-wide Enrollment, 1971-75

Year (Fall Term)	Total Enrollment of Credit Students	% Change from Previous Year
1971-72	30,853	+ 10.4
1972-73	28,025	- 9.2
1973-74	30,097	+ 7.4
1974-75	31,663	+ 5.2
1975-76	37,669	+ 19.0

Although the relatively steady increase in enrollment at Miami-Dade Community College, even after the period of its initial growth, has implications for the general education program because of the need to deal with the great number of students on each campus, even more significant is the ratio of full-time to part-time students. While the ratio has become constant in the last three years, as shown in Table 2, it is still significant that almost half the students are part-time students. It is likely that a high percentage of these part-time students have regular jobs. This data would suggest two conclusions: (1) that general education programs that attempt to integrate the student's college work and experiences must recognize the limitations imposed by these students' enrolling in very few credits per term, and (2) that many students who are working, including some who are enrolled as full-time students, have experiences that are very relevant to their general education. With reference to these data, general education programs should be planned accordingly.

TABLE 2

College-wide Full-time/Part-time Enrollment, 1971-1975

Year (Fall Term)	Full-time Credit Students	% Of Total	Part-time Credit Students	% Of Total
1971-72	18,126	59	12,727	41
1972-73	15,754	56	12,271	44
1973-74	15,760	52	14,337	48
1974-75	16,332	52	15,331	48
1975-76	19,521	52	18,148	48

Another significant characteristic of the general student population is the mean age of the credit students. Data is not available for previous years, but in 1975-76 the average age of Miami-Dade students was 26. In Table 3, it is apparent that a large percentage of students are over twenty-one and over one-third of the student body is over twenty-five. Again, the general education programs should be planned accordingly.

TABLE 3

College-wide Distribution, Winter Term, 1976

Age	Number of Students	% of Total
20 and Below	13,180	34
21 - 25	11,669	30
26 - 40	10,475	27
41 and Over	3,321	9
Mean Age: 26		

Part of the planning for general education will include recognition of the different goals of the various degree programs. Transfer students in Associate in Arts degree programs have different objectives and needs from students in associate of science programs. It is interesting that the percentage of students in A. A. programs has decreased greatly in the last five years, as found in Table 4. But even more remarkable is that those students in the Special category have increased from 25% to 41%. The Special category includes a high percentage of students who are undecided about their programs. The need for an effective advisement process and for a general education program that would assist these students in making career choices seems obvious.

TABLE 4

College-wide Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, Associate in General Studies, and Special Student Enrollments, 1971-1975

Year (Fall Term)	A. A.	% Of Total	A. S.	% Of Total	A. G.	% Of Total	Special*	% Of Total
1971-72	15,753	51	7,329	24	---------**		7,771	25
1972-73	13,072	47	6,447	23	253	1	8,253	29
1973-74	12,252	41	7,300	24	406	1	10,139	34
1974-75	12,813	41	7,166	23	418	1	11,266	35
1975-76	13,754	37	7,763	21	468	1	15,684	41

* Special codes include: Undecided, Certified Teachers, Non-degree Students, and Planned Certificate.

** The Associate in General Studies Program was not offered until 1972-73.

Another factor to be considered in planning the general education programs is the ratio of various racial and ethnic groups. Although this ratio varies among campuses, the college wide distribution, shown in Table 5, reflects the overall percentages. The data for the years 1971-75 distinguished the categories White, Black and Spanish Americans from other ethnic groups and from non-U. S. citizens. The 1975-76 data distinguishes simply White, Black, and Hispanic. Consequently, the years are not entirely comparable, and it is likely that the Hispanic percentages were higher in the years 1971-72 through 1974-75.

TABLE 5

College-wide Enrollments by Ethnic Category, 1971-75

Year (Fall Term)	White	% Of Total	Black	% Of Total	Hispanic*	% Of Total	Other	% Of Total
1971-72	20,289	66	3,546	12	2,618	9	4,400	13
1972-73	17,665	63	3,214	12	2,806	10	4,340	15
1973-74	17,829	59	3,455	12	3,894	12	4,919	17
1974-75	17,821	56	3,445	11	4,796	15	5,601	18
1975-76	19,686	52	5,669	15	9,283	25	3,031	8

* The years 1971-72 through 1974-75 include Spanish Americans, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cuban Refugees. They do not include any students in the classification of Immigrant Alien, although undoubtedly some of these were Hispanic.

In the year 1975-76, Hispanic is the only category.

A final aspect of the student population that has relevance for the general education program is the distribution or residencies. It is clear in Table 6 that the great majority of students, 91%, continues to reside in Dade County. The percentages of Florida, out of state, and foreign students have remained constant overall. Thus, planning can be done for the general education program with the understanding that Dade County is the local community for the majority of students.

TABLE 6

College-wide Residency Distribution, 1971-1975

Year (Fall Term)	Dade County	% Of Total	Florida	% Of Total	Out of State	% Of Total	Foreign	% Of Total
1971-72	26,149	87	1,622	5	1,514	5	946	3
1972-73	23,675	86	1,574	6	1,200	4	1,029	4
1973-74	25,930	87	1,482	5	1,060	4	1,232	4
1974-75	28,099	89	1,385	4	906	3	1,248	4
1975-76	34,031	91	1,591	4	881	2	1,166	3

In summary, the curricula for the general education program should be developed with consideration of these demographic data. The proportion of part-time students, the age distributions, the proportion in various degree programs, and the ethnic and residency distributions have implications for the nature of the curricula and the learning activities planned.

THE "BASIC SKILLS" PROBLEM

A highly publicized fact of higher education is that an increasing number of students enter college with severe deficiencies in the basic communication and computational skills. A majority of the American public now believe, as revealed in a Gallup survey in 1975, that proficiency in basic skills is the single most important achievement for high school graduates, even for those not planning to attend college. A majority also thinks that competency in reading, writing, and mathematics is more important than having a salable skill ("Seventh Annual Gallup Poll of Public Attitudes Toward Education," Phi Delta Kappan (Dec., 1975), 227-241). While attention has been given to reading, writing, and arithmetic skills, there are other basic skills, like speaking, listening, studying, organizing, and finding information, that should also be considered. In the past, individuals lacking these skills were often excluded from post-secondary education by means of entrance criteria and testing programs. But with the advent of open admissions institutions, these students are entering colleges with their severe handicaps. This is especially true of community colleges which generally draw a wide range of students from the local area.

It is evident that Miami-Dade Community College enrolls some students who do have these basic skills deficiencies. Because reading and writing are almost universal requirements in courses, students with extremely poor reading and writing abilities have caused the greatest concern among faculty. This is particularly true since all students in transfer programs have been required to complete English courses, and faculty assume that students can read adequately and will write acceptably in their other courses.

Finding solutions to this problem is not easy. Some emphasize the causes of the students' deficiencies, but without providing reasonable solutions. Others suggest solutions that have merit but are impractical for Miami-Dade. Some faculty do not wish to accept the fact that the college has and will continue to have for an indefinite period students who are deficient in these basic skills. They view the problem only in terms of intellectual qualifications, taking the position that many students in college now should not be. Those students are judged to be intellectually unqualified. Apart from the philosophical issue in this position, past experience has not shown that anyone has great success in determining criteria for measuring intellectual qualifications. In any case, the college is committed to provide equality of opportunity for anyone who desires to take advantage of post-secondary and lifelong learning.

If all students desiring admission are to be given the opportunity to attend Miami-Dade, it might be tempting to decide that they must demonstrate competency in the basic skills before being admitted to the general education program. In practice, however, it is likely that such a policy would become a policy of exclusion, especially for students who previously have not been successful in school. Those are precisely the students whom the community college has a special opportunity and resources to serve. To identify those students with basic deficiencies in order to place them in "pre-college" courses would be an adoption of a remedial tracking system that rarely has been effective.

A modification of this approach would be to allow those students to take some of the regular general education courses, but at the same time to require them to get special assistance in the areas of their weaknesses. This has the advantage of allowing the students to progress in their college work while correcting their deficiencies. The disadvantage is

that such students could be expected to have great difficulty in the regular courses if they are lacking in such basic skills. Furthermore, the required basic skills courses are placed in a posture distinct from the other general education courses. This could have negative effects for both instructor and student. To instructors it might appear that the basic skills problem is someone else's problem and responsibility. The instructor could remain detached from a problem which is integral to the entire educational process. On the other hand, the student could feel "labeled" and might resent the remedial attempts. And because the remedial work is required, the motivation for doing the work could be undermined--"do what is necessary to get through the remedial program" as opposed to "do what is necessary to acquire the essential skills."

Miami-Dade Community College has adopted a further modification which is to allow students to have the option to take courses or programs to improve basic skills, but with the stipulation that the student must demonstrate competency in the skills in order to graduate. A diagnostic testing program will provide students with a fairly accurate description of their weaknesses. Through the advisement process the students will be informed of all the means available to get assistance to improve weaknesses, and they have the options of enrolling in formal remedial courses, doing individual lab work, or getting other kinds of assistance. Progress checks on these students will be made periodically, and instruments for self-testing are available. If a student, however, has not made satisfactory progress after an academic year, the student will have to put more concentrated time and effort into the process before being permitted to continue a specialized program. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of all instructors to require acceptable performance in these basic skills, to

point out deficiencies to students, and to direct them to supplementary assistance. The instructors are obligated not to accept work that is deficient in basic skills. The one very practical problem is to determine the various means to certify that the student has attained competency in the required skills. Nevertheless. this third approach has the distinct advantage of certifying publicly the acquisition of basic competencies upon the awarding of the diploma, without impeding the student's entrance into or progression through the general education courses he is capable of mastering.

A report of the American College Testing Program indicated that many of the students who are now able to enter colleges because of the open admissions policy have not continued beyond the freshman year. The report concludes: "The implication is that the emphasis on increased accessibility to college, which may have been successful as evidenced by lower average test scores of entrants, was not matched by the provision of programs and environments compatible with the needs of 'new' students" ("Newsnotes," Phi Delta Kappan, 61-62). It seems valid to assume that the problem of student deficiency in basic skills upon entrance into college will not be alleviated in the near future. It is also likely that the public will more and more demand that the educational credential certify competencies in the basic skills areas. Instructors have emphasized that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to maintain quality instruction when a number of students lack proficiency in the basic skills. Finally, it is apparent that communication and computational skills are increasingly important in order for an individual to survive and function effectively in today's complex society. For these reasons and to do justice to the individual student and to the society which the college serves, Miami-Dade requires that each student demonstrate proficiency in the basic communication and

computational skills as a condition for completion of the general education program and for the awarding of a diploma. Evaluation of these skills is based on specific competencies that have been identified, and not on standardized scores or grade levels alone. The student who lacks these basic competencies may proceed with the general education courses, but should recognize the great importance of devoting sufficient time and effort to improve these very basic skills.

In taking this position on basic skills development, the college does not intend to suggest or imply that the acquisition of basic skills can or should be equated with post secondary education. The basic skills are means to an end, the educated functional person, and are not the only or even the most significant elements of the college's educational program. The college, however, recognizes that the assumption that a college degree implicitly certifies proficiency in communication and computational skills is in some cases unfounded. Consequently, Miami-Dade has formalized this certification. The awarding of a degree by Miami-Dade certifies a two-fold achievement--competency in achieving general education goals, including competency in basic communication and computational skills, and competency in the specific program completed.

THE "SURVIVAL/ENRICHMENT" ISSUE

In discussions of the nature of general education and the broad content of the curriculum, there is often disagreement about the focus or emphasis to be given. Some view general education as the setting for the acquisition of "survival" or "coping" skills which are necessary for an individual to be able to function and to find meaning in life, as society becomes more complex and demands on the individual become more intense. Others reject this emphasis in favor of a curriculum that "enriches" the students' lives by providing contact with a broad range of discipline areas, including both the arts and sciences, so that later in their education and life they may draw upon this background as they pursue further learning and become involved in new experiences.

The "survival" approach would present activities designed to enable students to develop the skills necessary to satisfy their basic needs and wants in a complex society. Many might question the appropriateness of discussing the fulfillment of the need for food and drink in modern American society where these seem so plentiful, but doctors and medical researchers are finding increasing evidence of Americans suffering the effects of poor nutritional habits and food quality. In fact, the search for food and drink that is healthful may not only be appropriate but absolutely necessary. Other survival skills which are more obviously essential for survival and fulfillment are communication skills, computational skills, interpersonal skills, group interaction skills, problem-solving skills, and general study and learning skills. By their very nature the acquisition of these skills demands active participation by the students in real or simulated situations. The image presented by this approach is

that of individuals learning skills in order to work their way through a complex social maze, where ambiguities and frustration are met at every turn, in an attempt to reach a state that is free of conflict and tension.

The "enrichment" approach is detached from most of the daily practical needs which every individual faces and learns to deal with in the home, at work, and in daily association with one's peers, and attempts to provide opportunities for the student to become more familiar with the reservoirs of knowledge in the disciplines. General education is considered to be an opportunity for students to broaden their horizon by having contact with the masterpieces of the arts, with the methods and successes of the natural and social sciences, and with the historical traditions that have shaped the development of civilization and the progress of society. This image is one of individuals for a brief period of their lives removed from the daily activities and anxieties associated with "earning a living" in order to understand and reflect on those permanent and universal concepts and theories which have shaped civilizations and will shape them in the centuries to come.

Miami-Dade's general education program does not reject either of the two positions. Certainly, all students must acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to function effectively in their environment. But it is also important that their education not be limited to only the here and now. An educated person is a man or woman of vision, one who can move beyond the immediate confines of the environment to satisfy personal goals and to address global problems and concerns. In the community college, where the majority of students come from urban environments where survival is for many a reality, the general education program should include both positions, insuring that necessary skills are acquired and stimulating interest in the broad development of knowledge and in global aspects of

civilization. Neither extreme would be appropriate, but the general education program can emphasize survival skills or enrichment experiences according to a student's needs.

The college cannot be all things to all students, and recognizes and encourages student learning in other areas of their environment. Survival skills can be developed in the home, at work, and in discretionary activities. The general education program considers the rational bases for these survival skills and provides opportunities for using them while addressing other learning goals. On the other hand, the general education program is not characterized by only theoretical, abstract, and historical material. These considerations are quite valid and necessary for a broad educational foundation, but as related to the general education goals they should have practical applications and students should test the implications of these theories and historical trends in their own environments under actual conditions. General education, therefore, provides a means for integrating theoretical knowledge and content which has "enrichment" value with "survival" or "coping" skills that will improve the students' ability to function both in their formal educational pursuits and in the other aspects of their personal lives.

THE "CAREER" ISSUE

American education is often considered, both in theory and in practice, as a preparation for a career or vocation. It has been generally assumed that education is for the young, or at least for those who have not yet entered a permanent career field. Dewey challenged this assumption years ago, but it is only in recent years, especially with the spread of the community college, that more and more adults have enrolled in regular college programs. Not only have more adults returned to college for leisure time and special interest courses, they have enrolled with increased frequency for career retraining and in courses in the liberal arts in which these adults had not previously had the opportunity or inclination to enroll.

At the same time as this interest in adult education and lifelong learning has grown, economic factors have fostered great concern for technical and vocational programs. Some educators, legislators, and government officials have taken the position that the primary function of the college is to guarantee that every graduate has a marketable skill. The U. S. Commissioner of Education. Terrel H. Bell, stated: "Preparing the nation's citizens for self-fulfilling work is the most vital function of education" ("Courses that Lead to Jobs Are Taking Over on Campus," U. S. News & World Report (Dec. 15, 1975), 50-52). This position is viewed both as a way of combatting rising unemployment and as a means of enabling unskilled people, especially minorities, to become self-supporting. But, periodic increases in unemployment can be expected in the American economic system; it is not the lack of skilled employees that is the cause of these increases, but rather the unavailability of

enough jobs. It is estimated that 80% of all college graduates now take jobs previously held by individuals with lower educational attainment. Certainly, it will always be the function of the college to prepare students for their lives in the occupational world, as younger students do come to college looking for preparation for their eventual careers. But, it also seems certain that employees will secure more and more leisure time and will face earlier retirement ages when they will have a significant number of years without scheduled occupational activities.

Those supporting occupational and technical education correctly point to the practical value of these programs. The implication often is that the liberal arts courses in history, philosophy, sociology and the humanities are not practical. Yet, unemployment has not been the only major breakdown in American society. Environmental problems are considerable. Social ills, crime, poor health, and drug abuse continue to increase. Without doubt, the breakdown in government, as evidenced by widespread national and local governmental corruption, is an indication that the fundamental considerations of the liberal arts disciplines--the nature of man, the nature of the good society, the proper goals of civilization, the relationship between government and the individual, the nature of human liberty--are not simply theoretical, but have extremely practical applications.

From this perspective it would be a mistake to equate college education with career preparation. There is other evidence that the simple acquisition of career skills is often not sufficient, or in many cases not even the most important condition, for success in careers. A number of large corporations invest considerable money and resources to insure that their personnel have an appreciation for the more traditional components of liberal education, the humanities, fine arts, literature, and

social sciences. It is also logical and there is some evidence to support the contention that the productivity of employees can be corrolated with their ability to find personal happiness outside of work and to manage their personal lives. It can be argued that to provide students with career preparation, without a grounding in concepts, theories, and experiences that will assist them to find satisfaction in all aspects of their lives, can lead later to considerable frustration and disillusionment when desired job opportunities are not obtainable.

Thus, education is viewed in its broadest sense. While the college will do whatever is necessary to provide students with specialized skills required for particular careers, it will also meet its commitment to enable students to learn whatever is necessary to be effective human beings. It is quite possible that students may have very immediate needs for specific vocational skills, whether they are just entering the employment world, returning for upgrading of skills, or preparing for entry into a new occupational field. The college will provide the opportunity to acquire these skills and the technical knowledge as quickly as is reasonably possible. Nevertheless, it stresses the importance of a "general education" and encourages those students who cannot or will not take their present opportunity to pursue this general area of learning, to do so when the occasion arises later in their lives. But for those students pursuing an Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, or Associate in General Studies program, the college will integrate closely general education, career development, and work experience in its total educational program. The college will certify completion of what it defines as a degree program only when the goals of general education have been met.

THE "QUALITY" ISSUE

A major concern of contemporary American education is the quality of education provided. What constitutes "quality" education is, of course, debatable, but generally the present concern suggests a need to return to the values and practices of the education of the past as the model for "quality." Thus, there is the implicit suggestion that in earlier generations quality education was found in American education and that this quality has subsequently eroded.

This erosion is usually described as a loss or watering down of academic standards. Components of these standards would include admission requirements, required courses, level of course materials, individual course requirements, grading practices, homework assignments and examinations. As educational philosophies of teachers and administrators have changed and educational research has led to innovative practices, the traditional requirements have changed and educational goals have been reformulated. Typically, there has been less emphasis on the memorization of facts and on the mechanics of academic disciplines and more concern for the understanding of processes and the theoretical bases of different subject matters.

While some educators have been fostering these changes, others who went through the old educational systems have become increasingly skeptical. To many there appears to be evidence that students are generally less grounded in the basic communication and computation skills; students seem to be poorer readers and to be unable to perform simple calculations. On the college level, instructors are concerned that the students cannot read and grasp the content of college texts and cannot write organized,

clear essays. Parents object to courses that seem devoid of "college" level content or that have goals other than the absorption of a specific academic content. Although these observations of parents and instructors may be well-founded, as evidenced by the decline in College Boards scores, there is seldom enough attention given to other factors outside the schools that may be causes of these changes. The role of parents in the overall educational process seems to have diminished. Although some attempts have been made, no one can measure the overall effect of television and computational machines (adding machines, cash registers, calculators) on the development of a child's reading and math skills.

Another problem is that many of the newer goals of education are very difficult to measure because they are affective or deal with complex behaviors for which objective measures have not been developed. For example, it is not easy to measure how effective a student is as a problem solver, or how satisfactory are a student's values concerning the environment, or how well a student has integrated his life so as to find self-fulfillment. It is even more difficult to relate evaluations in these areas to traditional grades.

At the community college it is important that a student be able to read, write and compute competently. The mastery of communication and computational skills is essential in any "quality" education. If a college has stated goals that focus on the development of the total person in behavioristic terms, the impact and importance of basic skills should not be overlooked, and their effect on total educational development should not be underestimated. Yet, quality general education is not simply developing basic skills. Nor is it the taking of certain kinds of courses, or the acquisition of facts and bits of knowledge. General

education should be intellectually challenging so as to develop the student's ability to reason and to solve problems. General education is not static. The individual is not simply storing information with the vague expectation that it will be used at some future time. The evidence is that the transfer of learning to applicable situations is not guaranteed if the learning is entirely theoretical. It would be a distortion to define "quality" education only in terms of theoretical knowledge, especially in the area of general education. While a strong theoretical basis for making judgments and evaluations is essential in any area, it is also equally necessary that the students participate in as many experiential learning situations as possible in order to test and refine their theoretical knowledge.

Therefore, "quality" general education should recognize the importance of basic learning and performing skills and insist that students have or acquire them; it should provide the conceptual framework and theoretical bases for further specialization and for lifelong learning; and finally, it should engage the students in experiential learning activities that require the application of theoretical knowledge to practical situations, so that their learning will be dynamic and will enhance their total development as individuals. Upon observing the recent concern about the preservation of academic standards, K. Patricia Cross provided a needed caution: "Standards we surely need, but the problem lies not so much in the preservation of the old as in the creation of standards more in tune with our emerging identity" (K. Patricia Cross, "The Elusive Goal of Educational Equality," prepared for the Annual Meeting of the American Council on Education, San Diego, Cal., 1974, p.3).

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